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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of the active pursuit of ballet as a hobby on personality. The study group consisted of 62 members of the junior ballet of the Finnish National Opera, ranging in age from 9 to 17 with the majority under 14. The dancers were given four self-esteem questionnaires which measured empathy, creativity, and other personality factors and a list of interests was also used to measure the dancers' inclinations. Compared with Finnish-speaking school students who acted as a control group, the ballet dancers had a significantly higher interest in music, singing, acting, writing, drawing and handwork, and less interest in technology. It is concluded that ballet mainly develops a junior's self-expression, improves self-esteem and self-respect, creates self-confidence and develops sensitivity and empathy. (JD)

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EMPATHY, SELF-ESTEEM AND CREATIVITY AMONG JUNIOR BALLET DANCERS

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INTRODUCTION

The goal of dance is often considered to be the same as the highest goal for education: to develop the personality by taking into consideration the individual needs and capacities (H'Doubler 1979, Kivinen 1977). Dance is also a means for creativity and self expression. At its best, dance expresses the kinetic consciousness; therefore dance is also held the most primary form of human art. Carr (1984) set the goals for dance education: to develop capacities and techniques, to teach the traditions and traditional forms of dance, to learn certain movements and series, to promote independent reactions based on the dancing skills, to develop one's own imagination and to learn to critically judge one's own achievements. According to Kivinen (1977) dance combines the physical, aesthetic and intellectual side of the personality. Doris Laine (1985) sets as goals for dance education in school mastering the dance technique, gaining profound knowledge of the history of dance and of music and of the place of dance in the culture. The general goal for dance seems to support the development of the whole personality combining the kinetic, cognitive and affective factors. Reaching these goals also means the development of empathy and humanity.

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There is little psychological litterature research on the personality of ballet dancers available. Alter (1984) has studied the creativity and personality of 79 students of dance and compared them to a group of students of English. The dancers are more creative, more intelligent, more positive and flexible; they want to

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be productive and dominating. The dancers had a more developed creative thinking, they had positive self esteem and motivation of achievement. Trigg (1978) has studied 41 active dancers of modern dance and noticed that there is no significant connection to their creativity and self-esteem and that modern dance does not increase self-esteem either. Parson & Lindauer (1980) carried out a study aesthetic nature of dancers. Several studies show that experienced dancers have a stronger sense for aesthetics than the beginners.

Empathy is an important tool for a ballet dancer. The dancer has to be able to express the language of art with his/her whole body. When a dancer projects his/her role, he/she has to try to convey to the audience the central and essential in the role. To be able to go to the direction that feels right requires strong self esteem of the dancer. The dancer can only rely on him/herself and his/her intuitive belief of being right. And active and longlasting empathy, in fact, is possible only with a healthy self-esteem.

The basis for a solid self-esteem lie in the fact that one appreciates, accepts and respects oneself (Kalliopuska 1983a;1984). Finding oneself and knowing oneself is the way closer to others. Accepting oneself is the prerequisite for accepting another human being and nature. The hierarchy for respecting life is formed by a clear self image, an empathetic human image, nature image and world image. According to the holistic empathy concept (Kalliopuska 1983a;1983b; Kalliopuska & Ruokonen 1986) empathy is a holistic process where several components are present: the affective, the cognitive, the physiological and the kinaesthetic components. Sensitivity is the main affective components; in other words, the capacity to receive emotions, to be on the same wave lenght. In empathy a person identifies him/herself with another person's life

and shares for a moment his/her ideas and emotions. The cognitive components mean the identifying and evaluation of emotions, the capacity to take another person's role or viewpoint. Empathy requires seeing the situation from a distance - being too close and letting oneself be carried away with another person's emotions is sympathy, not empathy. Empathy requires also the capacity to desribe the person in question the impression obtained of him/her. Empathy includes also kinaesthetic and physiological factors. The kinaesthetic factors are e.g. mimics, gestures, changes in the body position and voice. Blushing, caused by shame or paleness as a result of fear, i.e. physiological reactions, could be mentioned examples of the physiological factors. Each component functions as an independent dimension. When the central factors of empathy are known it is easy to promote the development of empathy in another person.

PURPOSE

The aim of the study was to survey the effects of active dancing on the personality. How do ballet dancers differ from their age mates as to empathy, self-esteem, creativity and the choise of hobbies? We supposed that junior ballet dancers have better empathy and self-esteem level than comparison groups.

STUDY MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study material consisted of 62 dancers of the Finnish National Opera junior ballet, 44 girls and 18 boys. The youngest was 9 and the oldest 17 years old. One third of the dancers were 11 years or younger. Majority of them lived in the urban area. According to the social classification by the Helsinki Statistical Office the dancers

were divided as follows: 61 % of the students were from social group 1 (highest), 27 % of social group 2 and only 12 % of social group 3. None of the dance students came from a family in social group 4. Thus, social group 1 is overrepresented in the material while the other groups are under represented.

The students filled four questionnaires on self-esteem: the Battle's Self-Esteem Inventory B version for younger ballet dancers (aged 9-12), and the Battle AD version for older dancers (aged 13-17), Fitts' Tennessee Self Concept Scale, two derived factors from the Coopersmith's Self-Esteem Inventory and the Rosenberg 10 items scale, the modified Mehrabian and Epstein Empathy Scale, a questionnaire on hobbies. We also used the Rorschach test and the figural part B of Torrance creativity test, picture completion. About 2-3 hours were spent to the tests during rehearsal hours.

RESULTS

The results showed that the young students danced 4-5 nights a week. In addition, they had ample of other hobbies. The following hobbies were the most common ones: writing, drawing, handwork, needlework, singing, playing an instrument, nature activities or collecting something. In my study on 1380 junior players of the Finnish baseball (Kalliopuska 1986a; Kalliopuska 1987), the 9 - 16 years old were interested in writing, handwork, engines and technology as well as nature activities. In that study the sports activities were dominating. The hobbies of the ballet dancers were also compared to an health education study carried out by Kalliopuska (1986c) and the Finnish Association of Temperance Education on 4283 students of lower level comprehensive school (grades 5-6) and higher level (grades 7-10). When the hobbies of the

ballet students were compared to the Swedish speaking comprehensive school students it showed that the ballet students were playing an instrument, acting, drawing, doing handwork, photography or were collecting something for more time than the Swedish speaking comprehensive school students. When compared to the Finnish speaking comprehensive school students, the ballet students were much more interested in playing an instrument, singing, acting, writing, drawing and doing handwork but less interested in engines and technology. Hobbies that give the chance to express oneself are clearly coming forth among the junior ballet dancers.

Table 1

Table 1 shows the ballet dancers' hobbies compared to those of the young in Helsinki in general in 1982 (N = 1852) (Lankinen 1984). Classification is defined often= almost every day or week, sometimes = 2-3 times a month, very seldom = more rarely than 2-3 times a month. The ballet students were also asked what does ballet mean to them. Following is a list of the answers: everything, life, profession, an important part of life, goes before school, of vital importance, future, hobby, beautiful act, work and self control, relaxing leisure time hobby, good exercise, good physical condition, way of living, nourishment for the day, friends, pleasure etc. Few hobbies are as intensively positively experienced as ballet.

The students were also given the modified Mehrabian and Epstein Empathy Scale. The statements were measuring sensitivity, affectivity and the capacity to meet another person mentally. Sensitivity is a central affective component in empathy. Sensitivity can be increased by an empathy education program. An empathy

campaign was organized for example in the schools of the Helsinki capital area during 1981-82. The campaign increased the sensitivity of both boys and girls.

Table 2

In empathy skills, differences between the two sexes are considerable even among the ballet students although not as great as among the comprehensive school students. In general girls are significantly more empathetic and sensitive than boys. The boys' scores, however, vary greatly from 58 to 90 points.

One could assume that ballet dancers, because of nature of their work, the constant training of the capacity to express emotions, had better capacities for empathy than their age mates. The young ballet students were also more empathetic and sensitive than their age mates (Table 2). In my study on the health behaviour of school students (1986c), the empathy level was significantly lower (M = 71.3, SD = 8.9) among students of grades 5-10 than the empathy of junior ballet dancers (M = 77.2, SD = 8.2). The same applied also to sensitivity (M = 13.6, SD = 2.8) among 5-10 graders than the sensitivity of ballet dancers (M = 14.7, SD = 2.9).

The young ballet dancers of the Finnish National Opera had a significantly better self-esteem and self-regard than the normal school students of same age as shown by my two studies (Kalliopuska 1986b; 1986c), see Table 3 and 4. Compared with the American norms, the mean result for ballet dancers indicates a very high self-esteem. The mean result for other groups is either average or high self-esteem. The comparison was based on the total score. A very low self-esteem may lead to feeling of inferiority, self blame

or even to self hatred. There were some students among the ballet dancers with a very low self-esteem. The self-esteem scores vary from 15 to 28 (max score = 30) for the younger and from 21 to 39 (max score = 40) for the older students. Their empathy had not developed either among them. These students can experience the training very stressing. On the other hand, they have the very strong norm pressure of keeping up with their course. If the talents of the young students are not compatible with the demands he/she may end up in strong role conflicts which again lead to feeling of inferiority, low self-esteem and negative self appreciation.

Creativity was measured with the figure form B of the Torrance creativity test, picture completion.The factors measured were flexibility, originality, elaboration, and fluency. Flexibility identifies an ability to make shifts in thinking or to change categories of response. Originality is the ability to provide unique and rare responses to a stimulus. Fluency represents the facility for generating information based on what is in an individual's memory. Only one statistically significant difference was found between boys' and girls' creativity, between flexibility scores ($F_{1,58} = 8.4^{XXX}$); boys has higher scores than girls (Table 5).

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Classic ballet promotes the development of sound self-esteem (dancing years & self-esteem correlate $r = .46^{XXX}$), positive self respect and increase self confidence of the young. Classic ballet also promotes the development of empathy (dancing years & empathy $r = .30^{X}$) and sensitivity - they are both important factors in conveying messages to other individuals. Classic ballet as a hobby promotes the development of a person's sensitivity and empathy because

empathy is expressed through emotions, kinaesthetic expression and intellectual understanding. Generally, the ballet hobby seems to develop beautifully holistic empathy in juniors. The ballet students have in general more hobbies than their age mates. The most popular hobbies are the leisure time activities that offer an opportunity for self expression. The ballet students manage normal school work better than average students. The ballet students own self is developed into a diversified and rich instrument in conveying visions of one's own experiences. This task demands both psychic endurance and strong self-esteem.

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Table 1: Junior ballet dancers' hobbies compared to those of the youngsters in Helsinki

HOBBY	Ballet students			10-15 years old in Helsinki		
	Often	Some-times	Very seldom	Often	Some times	Very seldom
Playing instrument	33	13	54	31	5	65
Singing	39	11	50	24	4	72
Acting	24	12	64	5	2	92
Writing	55	17	28	28	13	59
Drawing, painting	58	12	30	30	16	53
Handwork	52	14	34	24	16	61
Engines, technique	3	5	92	13	7	80
Nature activities	18	23	59	14	13	72
Photography, filming	3	8	89	4	12	84
Collecting	15	20	65	24	16	60
Another hobby	22			1		

TABLE 2: THE LEVELS OF EMPATHY AND SENSITIVITY FOR JUNIOR BALLET DANCERS, JUNIOR FINNISH BASEBALL PLAYERS, AND PUPILS FROM LOWER AND HIGHER LEVELS OF COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS

GROUPS	EMPATHY		SENSITIVITY	
	M	SD	M	SD
Ballet dancers				
Girls (n=34)	79.8	6.6	15.7	2.2
Boys (n=17)	72.0	8.9	12.5	3.1
Total (n=51)	77.2	8.2	14.7	2.9
Junior Players				
Girls (n=562)	71.0	6.8	14.6	2.3
Boys (n=819)	64.7	7.0	12.6	2.9
Total (n=1381)	67.3	7.6		
Comprehensive school lower level				
Girls (n=1193)	73.0		14.6	
Boys (n=1199)	66.0		12.9	
Total (n = 2392)	69.4	7.9	13.7	2.7
Comprehensive school higher level				
Girls (n=1878)	76.1		14.7	
Boys (n=1801)	66.1		12.4	
Total (n=3678)	71.2	7.2	13.6	2.5

Table 3: Self-esteem in younger and older junior ballet dancers, younger and all among Finnish baseball players, and pupils from the lower and higher levels of comprehensive school

GROUP	SELF-ESTEEM	
	M	SD
Younger ballet dancers		
(Battle scale - Form B)		
Girls	24.2	3.4
Boys	22.5	3.8
Total (n=36)	23.4	3.5
Younger baseball players		
Girls	18.9	4.3
Boys	19.7	4.1
Total (n=524)	19.4	4.2
All baseball players		
Girls	20.2	4.3
Boys	20.6	4.4
Total (n=1381)	20.5	4.4
Comprehensive school - lower level		
Girls	21.9	
Boys	20.9	
Total (n=2380)	21.5	3.4
Older ballet dancers		
(Battle scale - Form AD)		
Girls	31.9	3.6
Boys	31.8	5.9
Total (n=26)	31.7	4.3
Comprehensive school - higher level		
Girls	26.2	
Boys	26.6	
Total (n=3768)	26.4	5.6

Table 4: Self-assurance, self-regard, and lack of self-esteem in junior ballet dancers and pupils from the lower and higher levels of comprehensive schools

Group	Self-assurance		Self-regard		Lack of self-esteem	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Ballet dancers (n=52)	13.0	1.6	23.5	3.4	11.7	3.0
Comprehensive - school lower level (n=2380)	12.3	2.0	21.5	3.4	13.6	4.0
Comprehensive - school higher level (n=3765)	12.6	1.9	21.9	3.5	13.1	3.3

TABLE 5: JUNIOR BALLET DANCERS' CREATIVITY

Variable		M	SD	F
Flexibility	Girls	30.0	5.5	
	Boys	34.3	4.9	8.4^{xxx}
Originality	Girls	0.9	0.3	
	Boys	1.0	0.3	0.4
Elaboration	Girls	3.0	1.4	
	Boys	2.3	1.4	2.6
Fluency	Girls	8.3	1.1	
	Boys	8.7	0.8	1.5